

Planning Collaboration Initiative Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration

Conference Call Summary for March 11, 2003 Topic: Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) Review

The first round of conference calls for the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Planning Collaboration Initiative (PCI) continued on March 11, 2003 with a discussion of Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) review. This was the second of 15 conference calls to discuss the drafting of a National Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between FHWA and FTA. David Kuehn of FHWA Headquarters and Vince Valdes of FTA Headquarters facilitated the discussion. Jesse Balleza of FTA Region 6 also represented the PCI Team on the conference call. Cassandra Callaway and Kate Fichter of the Volpe Center participated in the call.

Representatives from the following field offices participated in this second call:

- ◆ FTA Region 1
- ◆ FTA Region 3
- ◆ FTA Region 4
- ◆ FTA Region 5
- ◆ FTA Region 9
- ◆ FHWA Alaska Division
- ◆ FHWA California Division
- ◆ FHWA Washington, DC Division
- ◆ FHWA Florida Division
- ◆ FHWA Illinois Division
- ◆ FHWA Nebraska Division
- ◆ Chicago Metro Office
- ◆ Washington, DC Metro Office

This summary provides recommendations made during the conference call on the following aspects of FHWA/FTA collaboration on the review of UPWP materials: (1) coordination and communication between stakeholders, (2) definition of roles and responsibilities, (3) customer expectations, and (4) a summary of the recommendations for improved collaboration. This summary also includes a listing of other issues that arose during the conference call and should be addressed, but were not immediately relevant to the discussion on UPWP review (see *Parking Lot/Bus Stop* issues).

OVERALL COMMENTS ABOUT THE PCI

The participants did not make overall comments about the PCI outreach process during this call.

COMMENTS ABOUT UPWP REVIEW

The conference call participants discussed the ways in which the review of UPWP materials could be more efficient and effective. Three primary issues were discussed:

- A. Coordination and communication among partners
- B. Definition of roles and responsibilities
- C. Customer Expectations

A. Coordination and Communication among Partners

The process of receiving UPWP materials from Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) and coordinating the UPWP document review between FHWA and FTA can be cumbersome. Call participants agreed that strong working relationships among regional partners can lead to improved coordination and communication, allowing for the timely and efficient review and approval of UPWP materials. These working relationships can take a number of forms, and can include stakeholders beyond FHWA and FTA. Without good coordination, however, the review process can become delayed, leaving MPOs and other metropolitan stakeholders without necessary and important planning documentation.

Examples of successful practices used to develop superior communication and coordination include:

1. The FHWA Florida Division has developed a guidance manual for review processes, which specifies that UPWP reviews should take less than 30 days.
2. The Florida Division also encourages Florida Department of Transportation and the Florida MPOs to meet together, with FHWA and FTA, prior to beginning the UPWP process. This allows contentious issues to be dealt with, proactively, at the start of the process.
3. In California, FHWA and FTA participate in an Intermodal Planning Group (IPG) in which they meet individually with each MPO in order to discuss the UPWP materials. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and other Federal agencies also participate. California is the only state that currently holds IPGs of this form, and it has been helpful there in making collaboration possible.
4. Also in California, both FHWA and FTA review all UPWP materials and offer comments on the materials, but only FHWA approves the final version (with FTA concurrence). This policy has been in effect since at least 1999, as part of a California FHWA-FTA agreement.

The following recommendations on improving coordination and communication were made to the PCI Team for consideration in drafting the National MOU:

- Consider the IPG concept.
- Provide guidance on the Federal requirements regarding the submission of electronic UPWP documentation in order to expedite review process.
- Have Division and Regional offices consider adopting a standard manual for the management and timeliness of UPWP reviews, perhaps through a standard manual.
- Provide an earlier announcement of planning emphasis areas. A joint memo to announce the emphasis areas could be delivered to the Field offices prior to the announcement in the Combined Federal Register (CFR) of the emphasis areas, making it possible for the field offices to provide the information to MPOs prior to the development of the UPWP.

B. Definition of Roles and Responsibilities

Different Field offices handle the review of UPWP materials in different ways, with responsibility for the process shared between FHWA and FTA and other stakeholders. Furthermore, the tasks of and responsibilities for planning are defined differently by each of the Field offices. In particular, participants raised questions about the multiple roles played by

planners in the Metro offices, and discussed the difficulties in determining appropriate planning counterparts within FHWA and FTA. This difficulty, which can lead to confusion and delay in completing planning review tasks, is sometimes exacerbated by staff turnover in both FTA and FHWA.

Examples of successful practices used to develop clearer definitions and expectations of roles and responsibilities include:

1. In FTA Region 1, FTA provides a joint signature on UPWP submissions only for areas with Transportation Management Area status (population over 200,000).
2. In Nebraska, in the case of multi-state MPO submissions, the FHWA Division office representing the largest city in the area is given signature authority, with all other interested agencies providing comment and concurrence.

The following recommendations on improving the definition of roles and responsibilities were made to the PCI Team for consideration in drafting the National MOU:

- Provide guidance on single-signature protocols.
- Consider the possibility of drawing a clearer distinction between the roles of planner and of grant-writer in FTA Field offices.
- Develop a policy by which each agency has a way to inform the other of new and changing staff roles, particularly on key projects.
- Develop clearer guidelines for the role of planners in the Metro offices (the Chicago Metro office was offered as a good example of FHWA/FTA collaboration).
- Consider a realignment of the planning relationships of Field and Metro offices.

C. Customer Expectations

While it is clear that there is strong qualitative support for the mechanisms of collaboration, the PCI Team asked the participants whether they have quantitative ways to evaluate the benefit of collaboration to their customers. No examples were offered of successful practices used to measure the effectiveness of collaboration.

The following recommendations for measuring the effectiveness of collaboration were made to the PCI Team for consideration in drafting the National MOU:

- Review FHWA's survey of state departments of transportation (DOT) and MPOs to evaluate their experience of working with FHWA.
- Glean lessons learned on collaboration from evaluations performed in 1999-2001 to review the work of the Metro offices.
- Consider how performance measures of collaboration could be incorporated in the National MOU.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The following list restates the recommendations on the topic of UPWP review offered for consideration in the development of a National MOU:

- Consider the IPG concept.
- Provide guidance on the Federal requirements regarding the submission of electronic UPWP documentation in order to expedite review process.

- Establish protocols for the management and timeliness of UPWP reviews, perhaps through a standard manual.
- Provide an earlier announcement of planning emphasis areas. A joint memo to announce the emphasis areas could be delivered to the Field offices prior to the announcement in the CFR of the emphasis areas, making it possible for the field offices to provide the information to MPOs prior to the development of the UPWP.
- Provide guidance on single-signature protocols.
- Consider the possibility of drawing a clearer distinction between the roles of planner and of grant-writer in FTA Field offices.
- Develop a policy by which each agency has a way to inform the other of new and changing staff roles, particularly on key projects.
- Develop clearer guidelines for the role of planners in the Metro offices (the Chicago Metro office was offered as a good example of FHWA/FTA collaboration).
- Consider a realignment of the planning relationships of Field and Metro offices.
- Review FHWA's survey of state DOTs and MPOs to evaluate their experience of working with FHWA.
- Glean lessons learned on collaboration from evaluations performed in 1999-2001 to review the work of the Metro offices.
- Consider how performance measures of collaboration could be incorporated in the National MOU.

PARKING LOT/BUS STOP ISSUES

The following issues arose during the conference call and should be addressed, but were not immediately relevant to the discussion of UPWP reviews:

- Participants want to know when there will be more information on the development of new formulae for the distribution of FHWA planning and FTA Section 5303 planning funding based on the 2000 Census data.